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Letter dated 28 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Astana Declaration adopted by the participants of the ministerial conference on "Common world: progress through diversity", held in Kazakhstan on 17 October 2008.

I would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 45, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Byrganym **Aitimova**

08-57789 (E) 031108

Annex to the letter dated 28 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Astana Declaration

We, the official representatives of the countries and international organizations of the conference on "Common world progress through diversity", held on 17 October 2008 in Astana,

Recognizing the importance of diversity at the global and national levels, within civilizations, cultures and religions, as well as the multiple identities of individuals,

Welcoming the efforts of international, regional and subregional organizations and forums and States aimed at supporting dialogue and achieving harmony between cultures, religions, beliefs, civilizations and peoples for the maintenance of sustainable progress and international peace, justice, security and stability,

Highlighting our common aim to preserve tolerance, dialogue and cooperation based on mutual trust and understanding and the accentuation of the common values of various cultures, religions and beliefs,

Recognizing that international relations should be guided by fundamental principles that underpin the corpus of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, equity, participation and non-discrimination at both the national and international levels,

Reaffirming that all human rights are universal, interdependent and interrelated,

Reaffirming also that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems,

Recognizing that globalization, while opening up new opportunities for socio-economic development, presents a challenge to cultural and religious identities of nations,

Rejecting any form of tension based on religious, belief, cultural and civilizational differences and their use for fuelling hatred, xenophobia and confrontation,

Reaffirming the pivotal role of education and culture for understanding, solidarity and social cohesion, ensuring the inclusion of youth and the participation of civil society in various related activities,

Underlining the importance of further cooperation between Governments and citizens of countries in those parts of the world that are known as the Muslim World and the West in terms of strengthening dialogue and understanding on various levels,

Being aware that responsible use of freedom of expression and access to accurate and unbiased information can promote cross-cultural and inter-civilization relationships,

Welcoming the Alliance of Civilizations and other existing initiatives and considering them as an effective mechanism for promoting further understanding and respect between cultures and civilizations,

1. *Stress* the need to encourage permanent contacts and dialogue within and between Muslim and Western societies at political, social, cultural, inter-religious and other levels;

2. *Agree* on the need to continue and enhance dialogue between relevant international, regional and subregional organizations, such as the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization of American States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization;

3. *Call on* all States to recognize that dialogue should reflect the multiple identities of peoples and individuals, but that within that context inter- and intra-religious dialogue can be used to promote understanding between civilizations;

4. *Underscore* the important role and the rights of women, and the application of a gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue in the process of realizing equalities and the right to development;

5. *Call on* countries to take appropriate measures against acts of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination and violence committed on the basis of ethnic or religious dislike in accordance with international law, international humanitarian law and human rights;

6. *Reaffirming* that each country has the primary responsibility for its own development and recognition of national efforts should be complemented by supportive global programmes, measures and policies aimed at expanding development opportunities;

7. *Confirm* that education and information are key factors to avoid stereotypes and any form of prejudice and misconceptions of different cultures and encourage actors in the political sphere, educational institutions and the media to promote intercultural dialogue;

8. *Encourage* the studying and teaching of the history of civilizations and the development of cultural itineraries highlighting the cultural heritage of those civilizations;

9. *Uphold* youth meetings and exchange programmes to promote cross-cultural and inter-civilization dialogue, peace and democratic participation among young people;

10. *Encourage* media professionals to establish a group of journalists to act as advocates for promoting inter-civilization dialogue, taking into account the recommendations already made by related forums such as the global inter-media dialogue and the Alliance of Civilizations, including but not limited to journalistic exchange;

11. *Welcome* the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 2 and 3 April 2009;

12. *Welcome also* the initiative of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz to convene the Madrid World Conference on Dialogue for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, as well as the holding of the high-level session of the United Nations General Assembly to support the initiative;

13. *Express* our appreciation for the hospitality, good arrangements and warm welcome made by the Government of Kazakhstan and its people.